UNITED
NATIONS

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Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/PRST/1998/22
14 July 1998

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

At the 3906th meeting of the Security Council, held on 14 July 1998, in connection with the Council's consideration of the item entitled "The situation in Afghanistan", the President of the Security Council made the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council has considered the report of the Secretary-General concerning the situation in Afghanistan of 19 June 1998 (A/52/957-S/1998/532).

"The Security Council reaffirms its strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Afghanistan, and respect for its cultural and historical heritage. It reiterates its concern at the increasingly ethnic nature of the conflict, and at the continuing threat this poses to the unity of the Afghan State.

"The Security Council expresses its grave concern at the continued Afghan conflict, which is a serious threat to regional and international security, and causes extensive human suffering, further destruction, refugee flows and other forcible displacement of large numbers of people.

"The Security Council deplores the fact that military support, including the supplies of arms and other related matériel, from outside Afghanistan to the warring factions continues unabated, despite repeated pleas to halt it made by the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Secretary-General. It reiterates its call to all States, in particular those in the region, to cease such interference immediately.

"The Security Council considers it necessary that more active efforts be undertaken under the aegis of the United Nations and with the participation of interested countries aimed at a peaceful settlement of the Afghan conflict, taking into account the interests of all ethnic and religious groups and political forces involved therein.

"The Security Council deplores the breakdown of the intra-Afghan talks in Islamabad and calls upon the parties to respect the wishes of the overwhelming majority of Afghans, to stop the fighting, to return without delay and preconditions to the negotiating table and to engage in a

political dialogue aimed at achieving national reconciliation, a lasting political settlement of the conflict, which has no military solution, and the formation of a broad-based fully representative government. As an initial step towards that goal, the Council calls upon the parties to agree immediately on a ceasefire, an exchange of prisoners, and the lifting of all restrictions on the shipments of humanitarian supplies throughout the country.

"The Security Council reiterates its position that the United Nations, as a universally recognized intermediary, must continue to play its central and impartial role in international efforts towards a peaceful resolution of the Afghan conflict, and extends its full support for the activities of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan and those of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan.

"The Security Council takes note of the assessment of the Secretary-General that 'Loya Jirgah' as an informal, time-honoured Afghan method of settling disputes, advocated by some leaders of non-warring Afghan factions, continues to deserve attention, and encourages the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan to continue to maintain useful contacts with them.

"The Security Council commends the work of the 'six plus two' group and calls upon all countries involved in the group to continue to participate in good faith with the aim of elaborating, on the basis of the agreed talking points, a coherent approach to the peacemaking efforts in Afghanistan, including the problem of curbing the flow of arms and other related matériel into Afghanistan in an effective and even handed manner. It welcomes and encourages the additional support of other Member States for this process.

"The Security Council urges all Afghan factions to cooperate fully with the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan and international humanitarian organizations and calls upon them, in particular the Taliban, to take all necessary steps to assure the safety and freedom of movement of such personnel.

"The Security Council acknowledges the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the United Nations and the Taliban on humanitarian issues and stresses the importance of its full implementation, including full respect for immunities of United Nations staff, and for the assistance of the United Nations in health and education. Noting that some of the obstacles to the provision of assistance to Hazarajat have been overcome, it nevertheless remains concerned at the continuing use by the Taliban of United Nations humanitarian aid as a weapon against the Hazara and demands that this practice cease immediately. The Council also remains concerned at the lack of supplies coming from the northern route due to insecurity and looting. It calls upon all Afghan factions to lift unconditionally any blockade of humanitarian relief supplies.

"The Security Council is concerned at recent reports of harassment of humanitarian organizations and at the unilateral decision by the Taliban to

relocate humanitarian organizations' offices in Kabul. It calls upon all factions to facilitate the work of humanitarian agencies to the greatest extent possible.

"The Security Council remains deeply concerned at the continuing discrimination against girls and women and other violations of human rights as well as violations of international humanitarian law in Afghanistan.

"The Security Council supports the steps of the Secretary-General to launch investigations into alleged mass killings of prisoners of war and civilians in Afghanistan, the outcome of which will be submitted to the General Assembly and the Security Council as soon as it becomes available.

"The Security Council reiterates that the continuation of the conflict in Afghanistan provides a fertile ground for terrorism and illegal drug production and trafficking which destabilize the region and beyond, and calls upon the leaders of the Afghan parties to halt such activities.

"The Security Council will remain seized of the matter and requests the Secretary-General to continue to keep it regularly informed of the situation in Afghanistan."